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A
R E P L Y
TO THE
A N I M A D V E R S I O N S
O N
The History of the Corruptions
of Christianity,
I N T H E
MONTHLY REVIEW FOR JUNE, 1783;
W I T H
A D D I T I O N A L O B S E R V A T I O N S
R E L A T I N G T O
The Doctrine of the Primitive Church, con-
cerning the Person of CHRIST.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. *K*

*Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and
considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*
Matt. vii. 3.

B I R M I N G H A M :

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[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

I SHALL be censured by many persons for taking this public notice of an *anonymous*, and especially a *periodical* publication; and what I hope to shew is, indeed, *in itself*, unworthy of any notice. But a wise man will consider things not so much as they are in themselves, as according to their power of doing good or harm. Now it cannot be denied that the *Monthly Review* is, in general, a respectable publication of its kind; and from the credit which it has acquired it has considerable influence; so that as nothing is exempt from plausible mis-representation, any writer has it in his power, with this advantage, materially to hurt the credit, and impede the sale of the most valuable productions.

I am sensible that a writer best consults his *dignity* by keeping silence on these occasions, and his regard for truth may be satisfied by correcting in a subsequent edition the errors of a former one. But my object, I hope, is not reputation (I write a great deal too much for that) but the careful investigation, and the most effectual propagation of truth; and for this purpose, I am willing to lay hold of every fair opportunity of bringing it again and again before the public.

I shall even rejoice in my own mistakes and oversights, if they should be the means of drawing more attention to any valuable subject of inquiry. Every person who writes on any side of the question helps to keep up that attention, and by this means the truth will, in the end, be a gainer. This, however, is the first, and it will probably be the last time that (if I be now doing wrong) I shall offend in this way.

I have not been without similar provocation to take the same method of redress before: but besides that the objects were of less consequence, the slow but sure decision of time (notwithstanding the Reviewer had the advantage of the popular clamour against me) has done me sufficient justice. My *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* being, in my own opinion, as well as that of my friends, of more value than most of my other publications, this piece of justice was thought to be due to it in preference to any of the rest; and the knowledge and ability of the present Reviewer makes him a much more formidable, and therefore a more respectable antagonist.

The manner in which this review of my work is conducted, must necessarily give a very unfavourable idea of it to those who have no other source of information concerning it. They must think it to be not only full of the grossest blunders, but even calculated to deceive the reader. It is, moreover, written in a tone that cannot fail to impose upon many. I know that it has done
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so, and I am likewise well aware that the injury I have received does not admit of any adequate redress; since for one person who will see my defence, a hundred will see the accusation only. But I shall have done my duty with respect to the public, and to a work that was sincerely intended to be useful to them, by endeavouring to exhibit to the *few* to whom I may have access, how little there sometimes is in the most specious and the most arrogant reviews of books. This may also put them on their guard with respect to similar reviews of other works; and the judgment of the impartial *few* may, at length, influence the less discerning *many*.

My criticiser, feeling the advantage of his situation, may avail himself of it, and reply in the same plausible and insufficient manner. However, having done thus much, I think I may be excused from proceeding any farther in this way; and for the future content myself with correcting any real oversights which this, or any other writer, shall convince me that I have made. This I shall certainly do the first proper opportunity; and for this, I am confident, the public, before whom I say it, will give me credit.

As I make this remonstrance under so great disadvantage, I think I may require, that if my critic should not chuse to meet me on even ground, that is, in a separate pamphlet, he should, at least, give his name; and indeed he

has virtually engaged to do so, by saying †, “ If
 “ Dr. Priestley can fairly acquit himself of every
 “ charge of mis-construction, and mistake, we
 “ will acknowledge the injustice of these ani-
 “ madversions. And if *we* are convicted of
 “ mis-construction, mis-representation, or mis-
 “ take, we will *kiss the rod*.” For it is quib-
 ling with the public to talk of *kissing the rod*,
 and at the same time intending to remain an-
 onymous. And I think he will hardly say,
 after reading my reply, and recrimination, that
 he has been guilty of *no* misconstruction, *no* mis-
 representation, *no* mistake; not to say that exag-
 geration of real errors requires acknowledgment,
 as well as misrepresentations and mistakes. In
 all these respects, I challenge my critic to be as
 ingenuous as myself.

It may be said that I ought, at least, to have
 waited till the review of my work was closed.
 But I do not know when that will be; and be-
 sides the Reviewer has said ‡, “ We shall, in an-
 “ other article, give a general review of Dr.
 “ Priestley’s work, and leave animadversions to
 “ others.” I chuse, therefore according to the
 good old adage (of which I am seldom unmind-
 ful) not to leave that to the morrow which may
 as well be done to day.

What I advance in this publication is merely
 in my own defence, and without the least inten-

† P. 525. ‡ P. 526.

P R E F A C E. vii

tion of hurting the Monthly Review. But I must observe, in general, that repeated misrepresentations of works in which the public shall hereafter discern real merit, notwithstanding such attempts to overbear it, will necessarily bring any publication of the kind into discredit with men of sense and candour.

I will venture to say that no work of any extent will bear to be treated as this of mine has been, viz. by exhibiting its supposed defects only, without mentioning any one thing with respect to its *object*, or *execution*, that is praiseworthy, or even right. Had my *History of Electricity* been reviewed in the same captious manner, it might have been with the same effect. I do not charge this writer with any want of *learning* or *ability*. In those respects he may be much my superior, but with a want of that *candour* without which there can be no true judgment of the real value of any work of *man*. And we have no *angels* either to write books, or to review them.

The reader will also, I hope, consider, that oversights and mistakes which are venial in the compiler of a large systematical work, are unpardonable in one who voluntarily steps forth with no other view than to criticise and discredit it.

This business will not, I hope, be without some advantage; as besides the *Additional Observations* it has led me to make, relating to the state of antient opinions concerning the person of
Christ

Christ in this pamphlet (and to which what there is in it relating to myself, and my own just defence, bears but a small proportion) it may lead to a fuller discussion of the subject. And I now profess, that in the same full and friendly manner in which I engaged with Dr. Price on the subjects of *Materialism* and *Necessity*, and with the Bishop of Waterford, on that of the *Duration of our Saviour's ministry*, I am ready to enter, with any person of learning and ability, upon the discussion of *the state of opinions concerning Christ, antecedent to the council of Nice*. My present ideas on the subject are clearly expressed, p. 34 of this pamphlet; but I shall be ready to retract whatever I shall be proved to have advanced too hastily and inconsiderately, and I will heartily join with my opponent in searching it to the bottom. I wish only for a fair and generous antagonist; and this for the sake of keeping close to the serious argument, in which alone the public is interested.

I consider this kind of controversial writing as of singular use, and I reflect upon my former publications of this kind with much satisfaction, as containing as free and as full a discussion of several important subjects as was ever given to the public.

I am the more at liberty for this investigation as Mr. Gibbon has absolutely declined to discuss with me, as I proposed to him, the *historical evidences of Christianity*: and bishop Hurd has

has not thought proper to take any notice whatever of what I addressed to him on the subject of the reformation of church *establishments*.

As I find it has been supposed, much to my prejudice, that in my late situation I was engaged as a *party writer*, I shall take this opportunity of saying, that I never wrote a political pamphlet, or a political paragraph all the time that that connection subsisted, nor was I ever requested so to do. It would have been a violation of the most essential article on which that connection was formed. *How*, or *why*, it was dissolved, about which there have been many surmises, concerns no persons but the parties themselves.

Birmingham, July 21, 1783.

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CORRECTIONS and ADDITIONS, &c.

HAVING given the best attention that I can to the several remarks which have been made on this work, I have not yet seen any reason to make more than the following *corrections* and *additions*. It will be easily perceived that they are rather favourable than unfavourable to my principal object. Had I been convinced of any other oversight, I should with the same readiness, have made the necessary alterations.

V O L. I.

P. 7, l. 11, After *Nazarenes*, read, and it may be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius, &c.

P. 19, l. 2, After *corrupted*, add, and as these antient Unitarians are called *Idiotæ* (common and ignorant people) by Tertullian, it is more natural to look for antient opinions among them, than among the learned, who are more apt to innovate.

P. 19, l. 6, For Successor, read Predecessor.

l. 10, Read, Justin Martyr, and Clemens, in whose second and spurious epistle only it is to be found, and the *ancient hymns*, not now extant, but in which, being poetical compositions, divinity was probably ascribed to him in some figurative and qualified sense.

P. 55, l. 21, For a *great part*, read the *greater part*. N. B. This shews that the greater part of christians in the time of Tertullian were Unitarians, and exceedingly averse to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Ib. l. 15, Dele, the pre-existence of Christ

Ib. l. 26, Dele, is not quoted by Irenæus, and

P. 216, l. 12, For *our Lord*, read *the Lord*.

V O L. II.

P. 11, l. 10, Read, In this age the table on which it was celebrated was called the mystical table, and Theophilus, to whom Jerom (if the epistle be genuine) writes, says that the very utensils, &c.

I shall be thankful for the notice of any other oversight, which, in a work of this extent, I did not expect to escape. See *preface*, P. 20. For this last correction I am obliged to the writer of the *Critical Review*.

A CATALOGUE OF BOOKS,

WRITTEN BY
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

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T H E

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

I N the preface to my late *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, I observed *, that “in a subject so copious as this, I am far from supposing it probable that I have made no mistakes, notwithstanding I have used all the care and precaution that I could. If any such be pointed out to me, whether it be by a friend or an enemy, I shall be glad to avail myself of the intimation, in case there should be a demand for a second edition.”

I now sit down to fulfil this promise; even before that demand be made, that I may give the earliest proof of my attachment to truth, and of my readiness to correct any oversight that I may have been guilty of. But those which I have hitherto been convinced of are so very few, and so very inconsiderable (not in the least affecting my main object, or any one position or argument of moment in it) that this early appearance before the public requires an apology, and this is two-fold: first, to answer some plausible charges of much greater errors and imperfections, but chiefly to take this opportunity of advancing some *additional observations* in support of one principal object in my work; which was to produce evidence in favour of the doc-

trine of the proper and simple humanity of Christ having been the original belief of both the Jewish and Gentile churches.

After an introduction calculated to turn my attempt into ridicule, the writer of the *Monthly Review* for June 1783, says, "Dr. Priestley's own sentiments on this subject," (meaning the Socinian*) "are well known, and if repetition could enforce conviction, he would long ere now, have seen the wishes of his heart accomplished." I do own that I have no wish nearer to my heart than this, arising from the fullest persuasion, that such, and such only, is the doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ; that every thing that has been added to the primitive idea of the nature of Christ, has been derived from the vain imaginations of speculative but inconsiderate men; who did not reflect that the proper glory of Christ is his being the messenger of God, speaking and acting by him; and who by giving him a divine and super-angelic nature, have raised such difficulties to the reception of the gospel by Jews, Mahometans, and Heathens, as can never be removed but by going back to the primitive faith on this subject.

Disagreeable as this publication must, from the nature of it, be to me, I rejoice that it

gives me another opportunity of bearing my testimony to the great and important truth of the proper humanity of Christ, commonly called Socinianism, though I am far from considering myself as being what this writer calls me, *its great advocate*. There is another person who has borne a very different, and a much more powerful kind of testimony to it, than any that I have done; and on this account I shall always honor him as the *first Socinian*, and I will add *one of the first Christians*, of this age and country.

I shall now proceed to mention all the mistakes with which I have been charged, and shall with great frankness plead *guilty* wherever I do not feel myself innocent.

S E C T I O N I.

Of the Nazarenes, Ebionites, and Alogi.

I AM told*, that " Toland, the infidel, in " his *Nazarenus* (so well answered by " Mosheim) has laboured to prove that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same class of " christians, and the true original believers in " Jesus".

This piece of Toland's I do not recollect to have seen, nor have I ever met with Mosheim's

* P. 516.

answer to it; but the opinion of Mr. Toland that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people, is, maintained by Le Clerc and other eminent critics, so that few persons at this time, have, I believe, much doubt on the subject. It must, I think, be right for this obvious reason, viz. that their peculiar opinions are represented by the most respectable authorities as the very same; only some have thought that the Nazarenes believed the miraculous conception, and the Ebionites nor. But Epiphanius says*, he does not know whether the Nazarenes believed Christ to be a mere man, or to have had a miraculous conception; and the Ebionites are expressly described both by Origen and Eusebius as consisting of *two sorts*, one of which held that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, and the other that his conception was miraculous†. Epiphanius also expressly says‡, that Ebion, (whom he took to be the father of the Ebionites) held the same opinion with the Nazarenes. I also think it may be clearly inferred from Jerom's Epistle to Austin§, that the *Ebionites*, the *Minei*, and the *Nazarenes*, were all the same people.

How then have I been so "precipitate," as this writer says I have been, "in con-

* Har. 29, Sec. 7, Opera, vol. 1, p. 123.

† See Origen contra Celsum, lib. 5, p. 272. In Matt. Tract. 13, Cap. 20, Opera, vol. 2, p. 88, Eusebii Hist. Eccles. lib. 3, Cap. 27, p. 121.

‡ Har. 30, Sect. 1, vol. 1, p. 125.

§ Ep. 89, Tom. 1, p. 634.

"cluding

"cluding that the Nazarenes and Ebionites
 "were the same people?" He says, "we have
 "strong reason to suppose that the early mem-
 "bers of both sects differed considerably in
 "articles of faith." I can only say that I
 should be glad to see, and have an oppor-
 tunity of examining, this *strong reason*.

This writer wishes to know in what part
 of Origen's works I find any mention of the
 Nazarenes. I answer that as he describes the
 opinions of the Ebionites as being the same
 with those which others ascribe to the Naza-
 renes, he sufficiently appears to have had no
 idea of any difference between them; but I
 own I expressed myself rather incorrectly, when
 I said he *acknowledged* that there was no dif-
 ference between them. Tillemont says, that
 Origen seems to have confounded the two
 sects §, so that his expression is pretty nearly
 the same with my own.

No person, I think, can reflect upon this
 subject with proper seriousness, without thinking
 it a little extraordinary, that the Jewish christians,
 in so early an age as they are spoken of, should
 be acknowledged to believe nothing either of
 the divinity, or even of the pre-existence of
 Christ, if either of those doctrines had been
 taught them by the apostles. Could they so

§ Memoires, vol. 4, p. 192.

soon have deserted so important an article of their faith, and so lately *delivered to the Saints*; and, having once believed Christ to be either the supreme God, or a super-angelic spirit, have, contrary to the general propensity of human nature, which has always been to *aggrandize*, rather than to *degrade* a Lord and Master (because it is, in fact, to aggrandize themselves) come so generally, if not universally, to believe him to be nothing more than a mere man, and even the Son of Joseph and Mary?

That the *Alogi* were those Gentiles who held the same tenets with the Ebionites, or Nazarenes, among the Jews, is universally acknowledged. Athanasius represents all the Jewish believers as having held that Christ was only a man, and says that they drew the Gentiles into the same opinion; and this is mentioned by him not in controversy, but incidentally, though very much at large. It is, therefore, the more worthy of credit; and especially as he himself does not seem to have been aware of the very obvious inference that may be drawn from his concession. Accordingly, it is not denied that these *Alogi* were considered as part of the body of Gentile christians, without having ever been excommunicated; so that it is plain that they were not deemed heretics. A heretic the apostle

postle Paul says §, was to be *rejected after the first and second admonition*, and the early christians were but too ready to use, and to extend, any direction of this kind.

Let any person at all acquainted with the eager contentious spirit of those times, and particularly the attention that was universally given to every thing that favored of *heresy*, think, whether it be at all probable, that if the majority of christians in those days had held the doctrine of the divinity, or super-angelic nature of Christ, they would have suffered to continue in communion with them, persons who openly denied those favourite doctrines, and whose rise and progress they could easily trace. On the contrary, these early Unitarian christians were not only tolerated, but we find them mentioned with respect, and even apologies are made to them by those who held the doctrine of the Trinity; which appears to have shocked these Unitarians very much. But the generality of these Unitarians were what Tertullian calls *Idiotæ unlearned*, and therefore we have none of their complaints from themselves.

§ Tit. 3.10.

SECTION II.

Of the inference from Hegesippus.

I HAVE inferred from the silence of Hegesippus with respect to the Nazarenes or Ebionites, in his list of heretics, that he, being a Jewish christian, was one of them; and this is ascribed by my critic †, to my “*zeal to support a system at all hazards.*” This however, I cannot help thinking to be highly probable. He, being a Jewish christian himself, could not but be well acquainted with the prevailing opinions of the Jewish christians, the most conspicuous of which, it cannot be denied, was the opinion of Christ’s being a mere man. Now, can it be supposed that if he himself had been what is now called an orthodox christian, that is a Trinitarian, or even an Arian, he would have wholly omitted the mention of the Ebionites in any pretended list of heretics of his time, had it been ever so short a one, and this consists of no less than eleven articles? Also, can it be supposed that Eusebius, who speaks of the Ebionites with so much hatred and contempt, would have omitted to copy this article if it had been in the list; and yet my critic says, “*how do we know that the Ebionites were*

† P. 520.

“*omitted,*

"omitted?" Their not being inserted in the list by such a person as Eusebius, must, I think, satisfy any person, who has no system to support, with respect to this article. A stronger negative argument can hardly be imagined. As to Hegefippus himself, we must judge of his feelings and conduct as we should of those of any person at this day in a situation similar to his. Now did any subsequent ecclesiastical historian, or did any modern divine of the orthodox faith, ever omit Arians or Socinians, or names synonymous to them (who always were, and still are in the highest degree obnoxious to them) in a list of heretics?

Had the faith of the early christians been either that Christ was true and very God, or a super-angelic spirit, the maker of the world, and of all things visible and invisible under God, and had Hegefippus himself retained that faith, while the generality, or only any considerable number of his countrymen had departed from it, it could not but have been *upon his mind*, and have excited the same indignation that the opinions of the Arians and Socinians excite in the minds of those who are called orthodox at this day. Nay, in his circumstances, such a defection from that important article of faith in his own countrymen, after having been so recently taught the contrary by the apostles themselves, whose writings they still had with them, must have excited

excited a much greater degree of surprize and indignation than a similar defection would have occasioned in any other people, or in any later times.

Lastly, Hegesippus quoting the same gospel that was in use among the Ebionites, might also have been alledged as a presumption that he was one of them.

My opponent says †, “ It is as remarkable that Hegesippus should have omitted the Cerinthians as the Ebionites.” How differently do we judge of things being *remarkable*, or *extraordinary*. I see nothing at all extraordinary in the omission of the Cerinthians in this list of heretics by Hegesippus; as they were only one branch of the Gnostics, several of whom are in his list; and it is not improbable that these Cerinthians having been one of the earliest branches might have been very inconsiderable, perhaps extinct in his time; I do not know that they are mentioned by any antient writer as existing so late as the time of Hegesippus; and as they seem to have been pretty much confined to some parts of Asia Minor, and especially Galatia, which was very remote from the seat of the Ebionites, they might never have extended so far; and therefore he might not have heard much about

† P. 520.

them. Whereas the Ebionites were at that very time in their full vigor, and though their opinions (being then almost universal in what was called the catholic church) had not begun to give offence, they were afterwards the object of the most violent hatred to the other christians, and continued to be so as long as they subsisted.

That Hegesippus, though an Unitarian himself, should speak as he does of the state of opinions in the several churches which he visited, as then retaining the right faith, is, I think, very natural. The only heresy that disturbed the apostle John, and therefore other Jewish christians in general, was that of the Gnostics; and almost all the eleven different kinds of heresies, enumerated by this writer are probably only different branches of that one great heresy. If, therefore, the churches which he visited were free from Gnosticism, he would naturally say that they retained the right faith. For as to the doctrine of the *personification of the Logos*, held then by Justin Martyr, and perhaps a few others, it was not, in its origin, so very alarming a thing; and very probably this plain man had not at all considered its nature and tendency.

He, as an Unitarian, believed that all the extraordinary power exerted by Christ was that of the Father residing in him, and speaking and acting by him; and he might
imagine

imagine that these philosophising christians, men of great name, and a credit to the cause, held in fact the same thing, when they said that this Logos of theirs was not the Logos of the Gnostics, but that of John the Evangelist, or the wisdom and power of God himself. And though this might appear to him as a thing that he could not well understand, he might not think that there was any heresy, or much harm in it. Had he been told (but this he could only have had from inspiration) that this specious personification of the divine Logos would, about two centuries afterwards, end in the doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son with the Father, this plain good man might have been a little startled.

That Eusebius, and others, should speak of Hegesippus with respect (from which my critic argues*, that "he could not possibly have been an Ebionite,") appears to me nothing extraordinary, though it should have been known to them that he was one; considering that they quote him only as an *Historian*; and supposing what is very probable, that he did not treat particularly of doctrinal matters, but confined himself to the acts of the apostles, and other historical circumstances attending the propagation of the Gospel; especially as he

* P. 520.

was the only historian of that age, and had always been held in esteem. A man who is once in possession of the general good opinion will not be censured lightly, especially by such men as Eusebius. Can it be supposed also that Eusebius, in expressly quoting *antient authorities* against those who held the opinion of the simple humanity of Christ, would not have cited Hegesippus as well as Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and others, if he could have found any thing in him for his purpose? This may be considered as a proof that there was nothing in that work unfavourable to the doctrine of the Ebionites. A negative argument can hardly be stronger than this.

My critic calls the argument for Hegesippus being an Ebionite, from his omission of the Ebionites in his list of Jewith heretics, "a *weak and impotent conclusion*:" and because I insert it in my *Summary View* of the evidence for the primitive christians holding the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ; he says, "We are sorry to see a man of such superior qualifications reduced to an expedient so precarious as this." Let the reader attend to the considerations I have now urged, and say whose conclusion is *weak and impotent*, mine that Hegesippus probably was one, or his that he *could not have been* an Ebionite. I shall continue this argument in my *summary view* till I see much better reason for displacing it.

SECTION III.

Of what may be inferred from Justin Martyr concerning the state of opinions in his time.

MY critic says †, "Our greatest objection lies against Dr. Priestley's representation of the opinion of Justin Martyr. He first translates a passage of that ancient father's writings in equivocal terms, and then draws a conclusion from it in direct opposition to its original design. Nor should I be prevailed upon by ever so many *οἱ πλείστοι* who hold that opinion. This Justin is made to say."

Now I maintain that my translation of the passage, though not *literal*, is *just* and not in the least *equivocal*, and moreover it is, of the two, less favourable to my own purpose than his translation, viz. *the majority* of Christians; and therefore I could not possibly mean to take any unfair method in drawing my conclusion, whether on the whole, it be well or ill-founded. For certainly the phrase *ever so many*, carries the mind beyond the idea of a bare majority, viz. as nearly as possible to the whole number, leaving as few as any person pleases for the *some persons* *times*, who are opposed to the *ever so many*, or *majority*,

οἱ πλείστοι.

† P. 521.

Besides the critic, by considering the whole sentence as a conclusion from Justin†, mistakes the ground of my observation; imagining it is wholly founded on the quotation from that writer, whereas it is in part a probable opinion of *my own*. That the reader may judge for himself I shall here give the sentence intire.

“ This language has all the appearance of an
 “ apology for an opinion contrary to the general
 “ and prevailing one; as that of the humanity
 “ of Christ (at least with the belief of the
 “ miraculous conception) probably was in his
 “ time.” The latter part of the sentence is wholly my own; and not an inference from Justin, and it is an opinion for which I shall soon give sufficient reason.

It is enough for me if I do not misrepresent my author, by a wrong interpretation of his own words. As to the *ground*, or *colour* that there may be for my own observation, the reader must judge between us, and to this I have no objection. And indeed I am fully satisfied that the *τινις* or *some*, of Justin Martyr were in fact, the *πλειονος* or the majority, and I even think it not improbable, from the complexion of the sentence, that Justin might be aware that it might be objected to him, that even the majority of christians held an opinion different from his; and that with a view to this, he

† P. 512.

said that he should not be influenced by it, though it should be so.

Tertullian expressly says that it was the prevailing opinion fifty years after that, and it is well known that that doctrine kept losing, and not gaining ground, in all that period. According to him, it was held by the *idiote*, the common unlearned christians, who he says, are always the majority of believers (*quæ major semper credentium pars est.*)

Besides this direct testimony, the thing is highly probable from other considerations. If this had not been, at least, a very general opinion, it can hardly be supposed that any writer would have spoken of it with so much tenderness and respect as Justin has done, considering how very different it was from his own opinion, for which I still think that his language wears a sufficient appearance of an apology. He also seems to intimate, some degree of *doubt* with respect to his opinion, when he says that "if he should not be able to prove the *pre-existence* of Christ, the doctrine of his *Messiahship* would not be affected by it." Why should he provide this retreat, if he had no secret suspicion of the ground on which he stood?

If we consider the time in which Justin wrote, viz. about A. D. 140, that is about eighty

eighty years after the time of the apostles, and compare with it the account that Athanasius gives us of the state of opinions among the Jews and Gentiles in their time, we can hardly doubt (whether Justin Martyr confesses it or not) that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ *must* have been the prevailing one in his time. Athanasius says that the Jews, meaning the Jewish christians were so fully persuaded concerning the simple humanity of their Messiah, that the apostles did not chuse to inform them, except in an indirect manner (of which he gives many instances) that Christ was any thing more than a man, and that the Gentiles were drawn by the Jews into the same opinion.

Since, therefore, according to this most unexceptionable account, as it was only an *indirect evidence* of the divine or super-angelic nature of Christ that the Jewish christians (by whom the gospel was communicated to the Gentiles) were ever favoured with; can it be thought probable, so highly averse as the account itself states the Jews to have been to the idea of any super-human nature in Christ, that they should, by their own reasoning alone on the subject, have generally abandoned their favourite doctrine, in so short a time as fourscore years? Or if, from some most unaccountable cause, and without any person of great authority to lead them into it (for no such authority can we

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trace

trace) they should have abandoned their original and favourite doctrine, is it probable that they would have been so extremely active and successful in the propagation of their new opinion, and withall have found the Gentiles so very pliant, as to have been able to induce the generality of them to make the same change, when at the same time they are known to have had but little connexion, and indeed but little respect for each other? Is a period of eighty years a space naturally sufficient for these two successive changes?

But if we take in another well authenticated circumstance, we shall be obliged to reduce this short space (too short as it already is for the purpose) to one still shorter. Hegesippus, as explained by Valesius, in his notes on Eusebius's ecclesiastical history ‡, says, that the church of Jerusalem continued a virgin, or free from heresy, till the death of Simeon, who succeeded James the just, that is, till the time of Trajan, or about the year 100, or perhaps 110, for his reign began A. D. 98, and ended A. D. 117. Knowing, therefore, from other circumstances what this purity of christian faith was, and what Hegesippus must have known it to be, we have only the space of 40, or perhaps 30 years for so great a change. So

‡ Lib. 3, cap. 32, p. 128.

rapid at that particular period must have been that *movement*, which we find by experience to be naturally one of the very slowest in the whole system of nature, viz. the revolution of opinions in great bodies of men*. Can it then be thought probable that, considering the Jewish and Gentile christians as one body, the *generality* of them, the *οι πολλοι* should have abandoned the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, in the time of Justin Martyr?

On the contrary, it is certainly not at all improbable that the more learned and philosophical of the christians, beginning to be ashamed of a crucified man for their saviour, and firmly believing the doctrine of the pre-existence of all souls, and of their descent into human bodies, should have begun to fancy that Christ must have had some origin superior to that of other men; that this should first of all produce the opinions of the Gnostics, who thought that the Christ, who came down from heaven, was quite distinct from the man Jesus, and felt nothing of his pains or sorrows; or that, these opinions being nearly exploded, the generality of christian teach-

* This is a *movement* which I could easily shew Mr. Gibbon, that he has not much studied, though it behoved him to have given the closest attention to it, preparatory to his account of the overthrow of paganism by the spread of christianity.

ers, or bishops (many of whom were educated in the Platonic school at Alexandria) should afterwards apply the Platonic doctrine of the *Logos* to the same subject, and that by their influence, opinions leading to the deification of Christ should gradually gain ground among the common people. But this must have been a work of time, so that the majority of christians could hardly have been infected with these principles so early as the time of Justin Martyr.

The philosophical christians, however, being the only writers whose works are extant, it is easy to account for our knowing no more than we do of the common people and their opinions, and that we are obliged to collect what we do know concerning them from *incidental circumstances*, as I have endeavoured to do. But these are often the least suspicious intimations of the real state of things. By such circumstances as these, the detail of which may be seen in my *History*, it will, I think, sufficiently appear, that it was with great difficulty that the generality of christians were reconciled to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and that of a *Trinity*, in any form. As Tertullian expresses himself, they were at first exceedingly *scandalized* at it, holding firmly to their justly favourite doctrine of the supreme *monarchy of the Father*. This also sufficiently accounts for the great number of fol-
lowers,

lowers which ecclesiastical history gives to every person of learning who avowed the then popular opinion, as Artemon, Noetus, Sabellius, Paulus Samosatensis, and Photinus.

On the subject of this part of my accusation, which my critic says, is the greatest that he has to bring against me, I now appeal to the impartial reader; whether, instead of proving me to have misrepresented Justin Martyr, he has not misrepresented me, and also whether I have not brought sufficient evidence of the opinion I maintained, viz. that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was that which was most generally received in the time of Justin Martyr; and of this I shall produce more evidence in the next section.

S E C T I O N IV.

Of the quotation from Eusebius; and Tertullian's account of the antient Unitarians, more particularly considered.

MY criticiser says †, “ If Dr. Priestley will “ turn to Eusebius, and read the chap- “ ter with such deliberation as befits an histo- “ rian writing on subjects of the greatest im- “ portance, he will find that his charge of un-

† P. 523.

“fairness (even if it be true) is not to be applied to Eusebius, but to a more antient writer, from whose book the transcript was made which has so highly offended Dr. Priestley.”

I have reperused this chapter of Eusebius, and do not think it quite clear that he is quoting the work of any prior writer in the passage that I have cited: for he sometimes only gives an account of the work, and not always expresses quotations from it; and he seems to me to insert observations of his own in what he does quote from this anonymous writer; so that, upon the whole, I am of opinion (though I may be mistaken) that Eusebius speaks in his own person in what I have quoted from him. However, it is sufficiently evident that he adopts the language, and makes himself answerable for it. Where then is the foundation for the tone in which the above remark is delivered?

I acknowledge however, that I should not have stopped at Justin Martyr, but have proceeded to mention the other authorities, quoted either by Eusebius, or his author. They are, however, of no sort of weight in the decision of the question, and all of them that are extant I had considered in the course of my work. There is no mention of the divinity of Christ in the first and only authentic epistle of Clemens*; it

* In the second section of this epistle we find the phrase *the sufferings of God*; but this is language so exceeding being

being only found in the second and undoubtedly spurious epistle, as I believe all the learned of this day consider it. Eusebius himself says †, “it is not so generally received as the former, nor do we know that the antients have quoted it.” He adds, that there were other later forgeries of writings in his name.

Also, though in some pretty ancient *hymns* Christ might be mentioned as *God*, yet being poetical compositions, it is most probable that it was only in some figurative and qualified sense, referring to the power and authority with which he was invested by God, as Moses is said to have been a God to Pharoah. As to the authority of Pliny, if he had been told that hymns were sung by christians in honour of Christ, being himself a heathen, he would naturally imagine that they were such hymns as had been composed in honour of the heathen gods, who had been men. He would be far from concluding from that circumstance, that Christ was considered by his followers either as the supreme God, or as a pre-existent spirit, the maker of the world under God.

But I wish to proceed to considerations of more importance relating to this passage of Eu-

ingly shocking, and unscriptural, that it is hardly possible to think that it could be used by any writer so near to the time of the apostles; and Junius, who was far from having my objection to it, was of opinion that the whole passage was much corrupted, and that, instead of *παθηματα αυτου* i. e. *his*, we ought to read *μαθηματα αυτου*.

† Eccles. Hist. Lib. 3, Cap. 38, p. 134.

sebius, and to compare his account of the antiquity of the christian Unitarians, with their own account of themselves, to see which is in itself the more probable. He, or his author, says*, that Theodotus, who was condemned by Victor, was the author and parent of that sect; being the first who asserted that Christ was a mere man; and these Unitarians are even charged with *certainly knowing* that this was the case, which is directly giving them the lie; and yet this assertion of Eusebius is undoubtedly false, as appears on the full face of all ecclesiastical history, and, as I have said, it may be proved from Eusebius himself.

He certainly knew that Justin Martyr had not only mentioned Unitarians, but had treated them with much respect; and he speaks § of the Ebionites as cotemporaries of Cerinthus, who according to himself, lived in the time of the apostle John. By his own account, therefore, these Unitarians, who believed Christ to be a mere man, were cotemporary with the apostle John; who though greatly offended at *heresy*, takes no notice of their opinion being one. Nothing, therefore, can be more contrary to truth or probability, than the account of the origin of the Unitarians by Eusebius, or his author; and if I be offended at it, is it without a cause? And how

* Lib. 5, Cap. 28, p. 252.

§ Lib. 3, Cap. 27, 28, p. 121, &c.

can the Reviewer doubt of my charge of *unfairness* against Eusebius, or his author, being true? As to the *very early date* of this anonymous piece, see Lardner (*Credibility*, vol. 3, p. 36) who refers it to the year 212.

Let us now consider the account that these Unitarians, according to Eusebius, gave of themselves. They are said to have affirmed with confidence, that the apostles taught their doctrine, and that it was preserved till the time of Victor, or Zephyrinus. What they actually said, we do not know, but it could hardly be that there had been no innovation whatever in the doctrine concerning the person of Christ before the time of Victor; because the Gnostics are well known to have been a very numerous sect, consisting of many branches; and before this time Justin Martyr and others had published their account of the personification of the Logos. It is probable, therefore that what they really maintained was, that their doctrine was that which was most generally received till that time; and this I think to be highly probable, if not demonstrable.

According to all accounts, the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was held by the Jewish christians in the time of the apostles. I do not find that any of them are ever expressly said to have held any other doctrine, only some of them believed the miraculous conception.

Athanasius

Athanasius clearly supposes none of them to have believed that Christ had any nature superior to that of man; and he says that they brought the Gentiles, meaning, no doubt, the generality of them, into the same opinion. This then may fairly be supposed to have been the state of things at the time that John wrote his first epistle, which was about the year 80, when it is plain from his own writings there was no opinion among christians that gave him any alarm, besides that of the Gnostics.

Taking it then for granted, that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was nearly, at least, universal in the year 80, is it at all probable, that it could have ceased to have been the prevailing doctrine before the time of Victor, about the year 200? Causes which tended to produce the opinion of the deity of Christ operated, no doubt, very powerfully; but still it cannot be thought probable, that they could have produced so great an effect in the space of little more than one century.

Another, and no inconsiderable argument in favour of the antiquity of the proper Unitarian doctrine among christians, may be drawn from the *rank* and *condition* of those who held it in the time of Tertullian, who lived about the time of Victor. He calls them *simplices et Idiotæ*, that is, *common or unlearned people*, and such persons are certainly most likely to retain old opinions, and are always far less apt to *innovate*, than the learned;

learned; because they are far less apt to speculate. Whenever we endeavour to trace the oldest opinions in any country, we always inquire among the *Idiota* the common people; and if they believe one thing, and the learned another, we may conclude with certainty, that, which ever of them be *true*, or the more probable, those of the common people were the more *ancient*, and those of the learned and speculative the more novel of the two,

In most cases the more novel opinions are more likely to be true, considering the gradual spread of knowledge, and the general prevalence of prejudice and error; but in some cases the probability is on the side of the more antient opinions; and it is evidently so in this. The true doctrine concerning the person of Christ must be allowed to have been held by the apostles. They, no doubt, knew whether their master was only a man like themselves, or their maker. Their immediate disciples would receive and maintain the same doctrine that they held; and it must have been some time before any other could have been introduced, and have spread to any extent, and especially before it could have become the prevailing opinion. We naturally, therefore, look for the *genuine* doctrine of christianity, concerning the person of Christ, among those who, from their condition and circumstances, were most likely to maintain the *old* opinion,

opinion, rather than among those who were most apt to receive a new one. Surely then we have a better chance of finding the truth on this subject among these *Idiotæ*, the common and unlearned people, than with such men as Justin Martyr, who had been a heathen philosopher, Irenæus, or any other of the learned and speculative christians of the same age,

On the contrary, supposing the christian religion to have been gradually corrupted, and that, in a long course of time, the corrupt doctrine should become the most prevalent among the common people, the reformation of it by the recovery of the genuine doctrine is naturally to be looked for among the learned and the inquisitive, who in all cases will be the innovators. This is remarkably the case in the present state of things. The common people in the Roman Catholic countries are bigots to the old established faith, while the learned are moderate, and almost protestants. In protestant countries the common people still adhere most strongly to the doctrines of their ancestors, or those which prevailed about the time of the reformation, while the learned are every where receding farther from them; they being more inquisitive, and more enlightened than the uninquiring vulgar. But still, if any man should propose simply to enquire what were the opinions most generally received in this country a century ago (which was about the
space

space that intervened between Victor and the time of the apostles) we should think him very absurd, if he should look for them among the learned, rather than among the common people. We have experience enough of the difficulty with which the bulk of the common people are brought to relinquish the faith of their ancestors.

Is it, then, at all probable that when the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ is acknowledged to have been held by the *Idiotæ*, or *common people*, and who are expressly said to have been the *greater part* of the believers (*major credentium pars*) this should not have been the general opinion a century before that time, but on the contrary that of the deity of Christ, which was held by Tertullian, and other learned christians; and who speak of the common people as being *shocked* (*expavescunt*) at their doctrine? Sufficient cause may be assigned why the learned in that age should be inclined to adopt any opinion which would advance the personal dignity of their master, and the same causes would produce the same effect among the common people, but it would be more slowly, and require more time, as appears to have been the fact.

Let any person of common sense then judge between these antient Unitarians, with respect
to

to the probable account of their origin and antiquity, and Eusebius, or his author.

That Eusebius himself should take so violent a part as he always does against these antient Unitarians, is not difficult to be accounted for. He himself was strongly suspected of Arianism, at a time in which the Athanasian doctrine was most prevalent, and though a learned man, he was not of the firmest tone of mind. In these circumstances, he would naturally make the most of such pretensions to orthodoxy as he had, and would be inclined to shew his zeal by investives against those who were more heretical than himself. This we see illustrated every day. This was the cause why many of the reformers from popery joined with the papists in the persecution of those who were desirous of carrying the reformation a little farther than themselves. This might, in some, measure contribute to produce the zeal of the Calvinists against the Arminians, that of the Arminians against the Arians, that of the Arians against the Socinians, and that of Socinus himself against Francis David.

SECTION V.

Of my being charged with advancing that Justin Martyr was the first who started the notion of Christ's pre-existence.

ANOTHER heavy charge advanced against me †, is, that I have asserted that "the notion of the pre-existence of Christ cannot be traced any higher than Justin Martyr." Now this is to all intents and purposes a mis-quotation, that part of the sentence which was necessary to give the true sense of what is quoted being omitted. It must, therefore, necessarily mislead the reader; and independently of that, it is a manifest misrepresentation of my opinion, not only simply mentioned, but frequently urged, and enlarged upon in the course of the work.

I have no where said that *simple pre-existence* was never ascribed to Jesus Christ before Justin Martyr. I must have been a child in ecclesiastical history, and shamefully inconsistent with myself, if I had said any such thing. The doctrine of the pre-existence was certainly that of the Gnostics in the time of the apostles themselves, and is always represented by me as such. What I say is that, "we find nothing like *divinity* ascribed to Christ before Justin Martyr;"

† P. 524.

and though, in one particular sentence, I mentioned *pre-existence*, as what we cannot with certainty trace any higher, it is in conjunction with *divinity* and not *separately*, as it is here exhibited. The whole sentence is as follows: "Whether Justin Martyr was the very first who started the notion of the pre-existence of Christ, and of his superangelic or divine nature, is not certain, but we are not able to trace *it* any higher †. Had the disjunctive *or* been used instead of *and* (which would have implied that neither the opinion of the divinity, nor that of the pre-existence of Christ, were prior to Justin) a reader of common sense and candour would have seen that it must have been misprinted. My reference to both the opinions by the pronoun *it*, which is in the singular number, sufficiently shews that, however improper and unguarded the expression may happen to be, I could not really mean to consider the two opinions separately.

But my criticiser, instead of making any allowance for a casual ungrammatical construction, and of ascertaining my meaning by comparing one expression with another, has absolutely tortured my language, in order to make me contradict myself; and has even employed more than one page out of six only of his own composing to confute an opinion of which my history

† Vol. 1, p. 32.

itself is a much fuller refutation. This conduct admits of no apology even in a professed answerer of a book, and much less in a reviewer, who should exhibit a fair and impartial account of the work before him.

In another passage which this writer has not overlooked, for he has quoted it p. 518, though without any particular notice, I have evidently considered Justin Martyr's idea of pre-existence as one *species* of a *genus*. It is as follows: "This writer even speaks of his own opinion of the pre-existence of Christ (and he is the first that we certainly know to have maintained it *on the principles on which it was generally received afterwards*) as a doubtful one, and by no means a necessary article of christian faith." Here I evidently refer to his idea of the personification of the Logos of the Father, which was a *kind of pre-existence* quite distinct from that of the Gnostics, who preceded him. Let any one prove this opinion of the personification of the Logos to have been held by any person before Justin Martyr. If he can (and I have not expressed myself positively on the subject) he will still be far from proving that it was the doctrine of the apostles; and whether the innovation took place a little earlier, or a little later, it will make no difference with respect to my principal object.

• P. 17.

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As this mis-representation affects one principal part of the great outline of my work, I shall take this opportunity of drawing it more distinctly, for the benefit of my readers in general.

What I have maintained in my late *History of opinions concerning Christ*, and what I do not find to have been much, if at all, insisted upon before, is, that the exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ began with the Gnostics, who maintained the doctrine of the pre-existence of all human souls, as independent created spirits, capable of animating human bodies. This error began in the time of the apostles, and is known to be referred to by John. When this notion was exploded, another, which I cannot trace any higher than Justin Martyr, was adopted, and this was the *personification of the Logos* of the Father, which was a thing quite distinct from the doctrine of the Gnostics, so that the patrons of each were continually combating one another. The pre-existent spirits, or *Æons*, of the Gnostics were supposed to have existed an indefinite time before the creation of the world; whereas the personification of the Logos was represented, by the first advocates of it, as a thing that took place immediately before that event, and with a view to it. The peculiar doctrine of Arius was, in my opinion, clearly subsequent to this; and it was after them all that the personification

ification of the Logos, being carried farther back, namely to all eternity, led to the present doctrine of the Trinity, consisting of three persons in the Godhead, perfectly equal with respect to eternity, and all divine attributes.

Instead of holding out to the view of the readers this great outline of the first part of my work, on which alone he has descanted, my critic charges me with asserting that the simple pre-existence of Christ was not known before Justin Martyr; which shews that he never once formed a right conception of what he undertook to exhibit.

As to the epistles of Ignatius, I consider them all, the *less*, as well as the *greater*, as being either wholly spurious, or so corrupted, as not to be quoted with safety; and I am far from being original or singular in this opinion.

Dr. Lardner, who thinks that the smaller epistles are *in the main genuine*, says†, “ If there be
“ only some few sentiments and expressions
“ which seem inconsistent with the true age of
“ Ignatius, it is more reasonable to suppose them
“ to be additions, than to reject the epistles
“ themselves entirely; especially in this scarcity
“ of copies which we labour under. As the in-

† Credibility, vol. 1, p. 154.

“terpolations of the larger epistles are plainly
 “the work of some Arian, so even the smaller
 “epistles may have been tampered with by the
 “Arians, or the orthodox, or both, though I do
 “not affirm that there are in them any consider-
 “able corruptions or alterations.”

Salmasius, Blondel, and Daillé, are decided
 that all the epistles are spurious; and Le Sueur,
 after giving an account of the whole matter, says
 that the last of them, viz. Mr. Daillé, has clearly
 proved that the first, or small collection of Ignatius's epistles, was forged about the beginning of
 the fourth century, or 200 years after the death
 of Ignatius, and that the second, or larger col-
 lection, was made at the beginning of the sixth
 century*.

Is this then an authority to be quoted so
 decisively against me, as to be preceded by,
 “We will endeavour to *answer* † Dr. Priestley
 “upon grounds less liable to be questioned,”

* Sueur, A. D. 107.

† The reader will easily perceive that these animadver-
 sions on my work are very improperly called a *review*.
 They are a professed *answer*, and yet the writer does not
 so much as mention the arguments on which I lay the great-
 est stress. Can any thing be more evidently calculated to
 injure a work, and to mislead the reader with respect to it?
 It is pluming himself on the victory, before he has even
 ventured to make the attack; having only as it were
 skirmished at a distance, and even that without gaining any
 real advantage.

(meaning

(meaning than that of the hymns used by christians in early times) by "the positive testimony of many of writings which he will hardly assert were penned after Justin Martyr †." I am not ashamed however to assert this after such respectable authorities as I have mentioned above; and I challenge this writer to prove that the passage he has quoted from Ignatius was not penned after the time of Justin Martyr.

If any passage in these epistles be spurious, I should not hesitate to pronounce *this* to be one. Such language as "fleshly and spiritual, made and not made, God incarnate, real life in death, begotten of Mary and of God, in one respect liable to suffering, and in another incapable of it," savours strongly of a much later age than that of Ignatius. It is nothing but controversy that teaches such definite and guarded language as this. It could not, I think precede the Arian controversy; and this agrees very well with the date assigned to those epistles by Mr. Daillé, which is after the council of Nice. I should almost as soon think that Ignatius composed the Athanasian creed, as this quaint sentence. They are much in the same style. My critic adds, "there are other passages in the writings of this most antient father, which are equally expressive of the two natures of Christ, but we think this fully sufficient to confute Dr. Priestley's assertion, without troubling the reader with any more quotations."

† P. 524.

Ignatius not being quoted by Eusebius, or his author, among *antient authorities* for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, is alone a sufficient proof that no such passage as this was to be found in the epistles of Ignatius in his time. If this writer did not know that the genuineness of these epistles of Ignatius was questioned, he ought not to write on these subjects, and if he did know it, it was disingenuous not to mention it.

As to the passage which my critic quotes from Barnabas, he himself acknowledges (but in an ironical manner, unworthy of the seriousness of the argument) that it may be explained in a sense consistent with the Socinian doctrine, as well as some passages of scripture. I, however, am a Socinian, and I scruple not to say, that, in my opinion, the interpretations of scripture which he ridicules are the only just and natural ones; but this is not a place for that argument.

It is true that I have quoted the epistle of Barnabas without saying any thing about its authenticity. In reality, I do not know what to think of it, and my critic must know that the genuineness of it has been much disputed. The passage, however, which he quotes is from that part of it, of which we have only an old Latin version, and this he has not rightly translated. It is *die ante constitutionem seculi*, which is not properly *before the beginning of the world*, but *on the day*

day before it. Now the notion of the Father speaking to the Son on the very day before the creation favours, I think, of a later age than that of Barnabas. Let any thing like this be produced from the scriptures. If this be a plain, it is, I think, a suspicious declaration of the pre-existence of Christ.

S E C T I O N VI.

Of the doctrine of the miraculous conception.

IN expressing my opinion concerning the prevalence of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, I make a limitation, saying, "This language has all the appearance of an apology for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one; as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) probably was in his time." This my criticiser calls "a very great inconsistency," * "the Dr. he says, "has no right to assert his *at least with the belief of a miraculous conception.*" The insertion is intirely arbitrary, and those who know less of the author's character than we do, and may not have the same well grounded assurance of his integrity, may possibly be led to imagine that he intro-

* P. 522.

“duced those words only to give some colourable pretext to his own principles.”

In all that I have read of controversial writing, I hardly recollect any instance of a more groundless and perverse misrepresentation of a writer's obvious meaning than this, on which so loud an exclamation is founded. For what can be more evident than that I do not use these words as those of Justin Martyr, but only as expressive of an opinion of *my own*, formed from all the circumstances put together. And certainly I have a full right to introduce whatever clause I please into any sentence of *my own*, provided that, as in this case, I make myself only answerable for the propriety of it.

The reason why I was inclined to think that the doctrine of the miraculous conception was pretty generally received by the Ebionites in the time of Justin, was, that Irenæus passes no censure on any that believed that doctrine. But it may perhaps, with more probability be inferred, that because neither Justin Martyr nor Irenæus speak of any other Ebionites than those who maintained that Christ was the proper son of Joseph, the doctrine of the miraculous conception had not gained any ground even among them till a later period. I find no mention of *two kinds* of Ebionites before Origen. I repeat it, however, as my real opinion, that the

that the doctrine of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) was the more general faith of christians in the time of Justin Martyr. Now let the reader judge what occasion there was for the severe strictures on this passage that I have quoted above. In general, I believe it is thought that I express myself so as to be understood; at least I endeavour to do so, but I can never undertake to guard my meaning from such unaccountable constructions as these.

As to the doctrine of the miraculous conception itself, it is not, in fact, of any more consequence to the Socinian, than it is to the Arian or the Athanasian hypothesis; for it is no impediment to the union of the Arian, or the Athanasian Logos, to the human nature of Christ, that his body was derived from Joseph. For any thing that we can judge, a man produced in the natural way was just as proper for the residence of this heavenly inhabitant, as one made on purpose; and if it was fit that Christ should have a human nature at all, it may be supposed to have been equally fit, that he should have a *proper human nature*; differing as little as possible from that of *his brethren*, as we are called. There is, therefore, no more reason why the Arians or Athanasians, should be more attached to the belief of the miraculous conception, than the Socinians.

The

The doctrine itself connects equally well, or equally ill, with any particular hypothesis concerning the nature of Christ,

But it is an objection which affects the Arian hypothesis only, that upon their scheme Christ is properly, and with respect to his person an *Unique* in the creation; there being no *class* or *species* of such beings, at least as far as we are informed of, a being created on purpose to be the maker of all things under God, or the medium of all his communications to mankind. Whereas, upon the Socinian hypothesis, Christ, with respect to his person, is no proper *Unique*, though produced in a super-natural way; because, when produced, he was precisely of the same *class* and *rank* with other men, who, in themselves considered, were fully equal to him in all respects. Was Adam less properly a *man*, and an *Unique*, merely because the *manner of his production* was so? It is therefore a very unfair representation that the Reviewer gives of this business in his note*. He might as well say that Enoch and Elijah were *Uniques*, because there was something peculiar in their manner of going out of the world, as that Christ was so, because there was something peculiar in his manner of coming into it.

Should I have any controversy with a Jew, I should not feel myself at all embarrassed

with this circumstance of the miraculous conception; as I should not hesitate to follow the example of the candid Justin Martyr with respect to it; telling him, that he was at full liberty to think as he should see reason to do on that subject; and that he might be as good a christian as the Ebionites were before him, though he should believe no more of the miraculous conception than they had done.

SECTION VII.

Miscellaneous Articles.

I.

I DO acknowledge that I have inadvertently made Victor the successor of Zephyrinus, but it is certainly of little consequence, and the mistake may be rectified without any injury to my argument. I remember that the passage stood right when it was first printed, but was altered, I cannot recollect how, or why, in the proof sheet. Men of much business, and of a very little candour, will easily excuse a slip of this kind.

II.

I also cannot now account for my saying that Hermas is not quoted by Irenæus, when it was a thing that I could not but have observed, or read of. This, however, is of little moment. And, in fact, the mistake is not so great

great as it seems to be. For Hermas is not quoted by name in Irenæus, and when all the circumstances are considered, I even think it may admit of some doubt whether the short passage that Irenæus does cite was intended by him for a quotation from Hermas. The whole passage is as follows *, “The scripture therefore well says, In the first place believe that there is one God, who created and established all things, making them out of nothing;” and that passage is found in the pastor of Hermas, || but we have only a Latin translation of Hermas, and therefore cannot be quite sure that the words were the very same, and the sense of them is certainly found in what is properly called *the scripture*; and I do not know that Irenæus ever quotes any other book by this title except those which we now characterize in that manner. He quotes no other author, I believe, without either his name, or some title, or circumstance, sufficiently descriptive of him. However, I do not insist upon this, and shall correct the passage.

Tertullian says of this work of Hermas § *ab omni concilio Ecclesiarum inter apocrypha et falsa judicatur. It is rejected as spurious by all the councils of the churches.*

III.

With respect to the *Alogi*, the Reviewer says, † “why should it be doubted that there were

* Lib. 4, cap. 37, p. 330. || Lib. 2, Mand. 1.

§ De Pudicitia cap. 10, p. 563. † P. 521,

“heretics

“ heretics in the time of Epiphanius, who re-
 “ jected the gospel of St. John? Were there not
 “ heretics in his day, and long before, who re-
 “ jected other books of the New Testament?
 “ Dr. Priestley’s conjecture will not be easily
 “ admitted. The contrary supposition is na-
 “ tural *a priori*, and it has the support of
 “ history too.”

I ask, of what history before, and in fact,
 besides, that of Epiphanius. It is sufficiently
 evident that there could not have been any
 who rejected all the writings of John before
 the time of Eusebius, who considers very par-
 ticularly the objections that had been made to
 the genuineness of the other books; and that
 the same *Alogi* should reject these books af-
 ter the time of Eusebius, and not before, is
 highly improbable. Epiphanius himself ascribes
 this rejection to the *Alogi* in general, and not
 to those of his time only; and he supposes
 the heresy of the *Alogi* to have been an old
 one, of which that of Theodotus was a
 branch.

As to the testimony of Epiphanius, especi-
 ally concerning those against whom he writes
 with so much inveteracy, I own it weighs no
 more with me than it did with Le Clerc, whose
 opinion of this writer may be seen in his ec-
 clesiastical

eclesiastical history †. He is certainly the least to be depended upon of any of the fathers.

The Reviewer adds, "was there not a modern disciple of Artemon who rejected, if not the whole of St. John's gospel, yet the introduction to it? It is but proceeding a step farther to pronounce the whole to be spurious."

Though a Socinian myself, I do not hold myself obliged to defend what has been advanced by any other Socinian. Like men who think for themselves we differ as much as others who go by the same common name. But certainly this censure is illiberal and unjust. On what grounds, S. Crellius rejected the introduction of St. John, I cannot tell. His grandfather, the famous John Crellius, did not. But it has always been deemed a sufficient objection to the genuineness of any writing, that it contains opinions which, from other evidence, appear not to have been those of the age in which it was supposed to have been written. So far am I from rejecting this introduction, that I think it inexplicable except upon Socinian principles. However, between rejecting this *introduction*, and rejecting the *whole gospel*, there are many more steps, or a much larger step, than my Reviewer seems to imagine. I

† A. D. 103.

hope, this writer did not mean to insinuate that Socinians in general make so little account of the gospels, or any part of them, that there is but a small step between them and unbelievers; though by some he may be so understood.

C O N C L U S I O N.

THUS have I presented my readers with a fair and candid state of the charges which have been brought against my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*; and I think I have made it appear, that all the real oversights are of very little consequence, and may be easily rectified without the least injury to my argument in any one place. I therefore leave it with my readers to determine whether there was any just cause for such vehement exclamation as that with which the critic begins his remarks. “ When
 “ we review the passages we have now transcribed,
 “ we are equally grieved and astonished. *Peri-
 “ culosum est in Limine offendere!* We are grieved
 “ to see a writer of Dr. Priestley’s eminence,
 “ and who hath long stood very high, even in
 “ the opinion of his enemies, for integrity of
 “ character, laying himself so open to the charge
 “ of perversion and mis-representation. We are
 “ astonished at his rashness, though we know
 “ that great zeal doth not always listen to the
 “ more scrupulous dictates of prudence. But
 common

"common sense should at least teach it to pre-
 "serve a decent appearance; and in matters
 "that fall within the circle of history, and where
 "invention can have no play, a writer should
 "be careful not to give his enemies cause for
 "exultation by positive assertions, which are not
 "only *without* proof, but in *direct opposition* to
 "it. We hope that Dr. Priestley will not think
 "that *we* are become his enemies for speaking
 "the truth. He is the last person that can with
 "any grace, complain of a freedom of this sort.
 "He often invites it with an earnestness which
 "shews that he is not afraid of it. We rely on
 "his candour for the freedom we now take with
 "him; and if that should prove to be less in
 "power than it is in form (which, however we
 "do not think will be the case) we shall rest
 "satisfied with the integrity of our own mo-
 "tives." Such an attempt to alarm the public,
 and prejudice the minds of their readers against it,
 ought certainly to have had some better foundation,

As to this writer's *integrity*, I do not call it in
 question; but am very willing to account for
 his mistakes and mis-representations on princi-
 ples similar to those on which, with some de-
 gree of candor, he accounts for what he suppo-
 sed to be mine. Every effect must have an ad-
 equate cause, and I cannot account for this wri-
 ter's very severe and highly unjust treatment of
 my book without supposing that he looked in-
 to it (from what cause I cannot divine) with
 a very

a very eager desire to find fault with it, and to expose it. A good natured critic might have pointed out the same oversights, and have shewn how they might be corrected without any real injury to the work.

It is not easy, in a work of such extent, the materials for which were necessarily collected at different times, to put the whole together (when some of the facts, and the evidence of them must have been in part obliterated from the mind) without making inconsiderable mistakes. No first edition of any large historical work was ever free from them. All these I shall be as solicitous to rectify as any person can be to find them out; and every intimation of this kind I shall willingly receive, whether it comes from a friend or a foe.

I have already drawn out a list of such *Corrections* and *Additions* as I think of any consequence; and if there be another edition of the work, I may perhaps alter the construction of some other passages which readers of the same turn with this Reviewer may misunderstand. But I cannot pretend to write for such readers. It would be giving a great deal of time to very little purpose, and after all might not be effectual; for it is no uncommon thing to labour style into obscurity. I write for the bulk of readers, who have some candour as well as good sense. We do not in this coun-

try build our houses so as to have nothing to fear from hurricanes or earthquakes. It is enough to guard them against more common accidents.

This *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* is a work that I have long had in view. I consider it as the most *useful*, and therefore I wish to make it the most *correct* of all my publications. Nothing shall be wanting on my part to make it so, and I hope my enemies will not be wanting on theirs. My object, I trust, is *truth*. I shall pursue it with fairness, and without fear of consequences, and I shall consider every man as acting with me who shall aid me in the pursuit. Opposition is what I always expected, and in reality do not dislike. Indeed no person ought to step into the great amphitheatre of the public, who is not willing to take his chance for all accidents (for treatment fair and unfair) and who is not prepared to meet them. Few persons have been more disciplined in this way than myself, and therefore I must be made of bad materials indeed, if I be not better prepared than most others for all these events. It will be happy if the discipline of this life in general prepare me as well for the exercises of another.

It may amuse some of my readers to be informed that, excepting a copy of verses prefixed ~~to~~ ^{and} Peter Annet's short hand, written when I was a school

a school boy, my first essay for the press was an article in the *Monthly Review*; so that when I was twenty I was placed upon the bench, and now at fifty I stand at the bar, and sometimes perhaps before such judges as I myself then was. From this awful tribunal, though my real merit has been nearly the same, I have sometimes received the most virulent censure, and at others the greatest applause, when I have been conscious to myself that I have not been entitled to either. But undue praise may serve to counterbalance undue censure.

As to my *literary reputation*, I can truly say that, little as it may be, it is quite sufficient to content me, and it ought to be so, for it is something more than I deserve. I can pretend to no such *superior qualifications* as my present critic, whether in earnest or not, has thought proper * to ascribe to me. Success in such pursuits as I have been engaged in, I well know, requires no great extent of mental power, but God has been pleased to give me an active, and I hope an honest mind; and when a man is always busily seeking, with his eyes fairly open, and especially in places where others are afraid to go, he will sometimes find things worth looking for, and that had escaped more timid researchers.

* P. 521.

It has pleased God, in the course of his providence, to open my own eyes, after having been educated in all the gloom and darkness of Calvinism, and I am determined (in conjunction with my philosophical researches) to do all that I can to open the eyes of others. With this object in view, I am ready, with the apostle, to go through *evil report as well as good report*; and whatever of active life may remain to me, I am resolved to make the most of it; there being, as the saying is, *rest enough in the grave*. I have no higher wish with respect to this life, than to live and die in the various pursuits in which I am now engaged; and I hope to rise to a scene of equal activity, and of equally pleasurable and useful pursuits, in a future life.

ERRATUM.

P. 48, l. 20, for *it*, read *the work*.

E I N I S